

Vitreous Haemorrhage

A number of conditions can cause a vitreous haemorrhage, where blood leaks into the vitreous 'gel' inside the eye.

The eye is filled with a clear vitreous 'gel'. When blood leaks into this gel, usually from blockage or damage to the blood vessels of the retina, is known as a vitreous haemorrhage. This usually results in blurred vision, as the leaked fluids block the light that passes into the eye.

Symptoms

Vitreous haemorrhage normally occurs suddenly, and without any pain. Symptoms range from the sudden appearance of spots or floaters in your vision, to a sudden blurring of vision, and in severe cases, sudden blindness.

Some people find that their vision tends to be worse in the morning, as the blood has settled to the back of their eye during the night

Causes

There are three main causes of vitreous haemorrhage:

Damage to normal blood vessels

Retinal blood vessels that are damaged through injury or trauma can cause a vitreous haemorrhage. Some eye problems can also cause damage to the blood vessels of the retina, such as retinal tears. A retinal vein occlusion can also cause vitreous haemorrhage, as it blocks the veins that feed the retina, which may then bleed into the vitreous 'gel'.

Growth of abnormal blood vessels

Some eye conditions can cause the growth of abnormal blood vessels that bleed into the vitreous 'gel' of the eye. The later stages of diabetic retinopathy, some retinal vein occlusions, and occasionally wet AMD can cause abnormal, delicate blood vessels to grow and bleed into the vitreous cavity.

Bleeding from other parts of the eye

Occasionally, blood from another source can cause a vitreous haemorrhage. While it is very rare, a haemorrhage in another part of the eye, or even a tumour, can cause blood to leak through into the vitreous 'gel'.

Treatment

Vitreous haemorrhage sometimes goes away by itself, or it can be removed with vitrectomy surgery, which may also be required to treat the cause of the haemorrhage.